

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Michigan Dream At Risk”

Years of Disinvestment in Key Michigan Assets ‘Degrade’ Pure Michigan, Frustrate Michigan Citizens

EAST LANSING, MI - The Michigan Economic Center (MEC) at Prima Civitas' new interactive report: "Michigan Dream at Risk" (www.themichigandream.org) details the continued long-term degradation into 2014 of key Michigan assets the public associates with Pure Michigan, and the effects of this disinvestment on family incomes and opportunity.

"Michigan citizens are very clear in telling us the reason Michigan's economy is not where it needs to be, is not because we don't have a good enough business climate," said John Austin, author of the report. "The reason we are not where we need to be is that we've been tearing down, not building up the things that are Pure Michigan...that Michigan's people care most about...and that also power our economy. And Michigan's people aren't happy about it."

The Michigan Economic Center's citizen research included focus groups, surveys and documentary journalism including a Pure Michigan-style video in which citizens share their hopes (and frustrations) over the direction of their state. This research found particularly strong citizen associations and emotional attachment with Michigan attributes and values that they feel also underpin economic success, including:

- Great schools and affordable higher education, where hard work creates a path to new opportunity and a better job,
- Roads and communities that aren't falling apart, that citizens can be proud of and that are great places to raise a family,
- Clean waters, parks and special outdoor places where citizens can escape with their families.

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The report documents and illustrates the disinvestment, degradation, and citizen frustration with the diminished condition of assets they view as key "pillars" of Michigan's economic prosperity, including:

- Roads: "Worst roads in the nation". 15 percent drop in state investment in transportation systems from 2004 to 2014.
- City services: "4,000 fewer firefighters and police in Michigan communities". Local revenue sharing has declined 31 percent from 2004 to 2014
- Children: 16 percent decline in K-12 investment from 2004 to 2014, leading to elimination of arts, music, larger classes, and diminished quality
- Higher education: "College tuitions have doubled". 29 percent real investment drop in higher education funding from 2004 to 2014
- Outdoors: "Miles of polluted rivers has doubled; beach closures are up 22% over past 5 years". Conservation funding down 6% from 2004 to 2014.
- Incomes: "Biggest fall in family incomes in the nation." Michigan has fallen from 19th to 37th in the nation in personal incomes from 2004 to 2014

"The current budget takes some baby steps towards reversing these trends," said Austin. "But leaders are still punting on some of our biggest challenges-and public embarrassments-like the condition of our roads."

"This report tells us that in the view of Michigan citizens, we have miles to go to make Pure Michigan more than an idealized marketing campaign; and we won't make headway until the people of Michigan insist that their representatives act to rebuild the state they love and the things they care most about: including investing in higher education as business leaders suggest; fixing our roads as called for by the Governor (to no avail), and providing basic community services like safety, fire, and water that are a problem everywhere."

These findings were confirmed in a 1000 person MEC citizen survey that found:

- 64 percent of Michigan citizens believe the most important thing state government can do for job creation is to "provide quality education, good roads and transportation, good public services like safety, water, fire, parks and libraries that create an environment in which people want to live, work and run a business." Only 29 percent believe the most important thing state government can do is to "cut taxes for individuals and business. That's what really creates jobs."
- 51 percent of citizens believe important public services (including road repair, local police and fire, quality schools and higher education, and state parks) are in worse or much worse condition today than 10 to 15 years ago.

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The unique report is designed to be interactive, and includes elements such as videos and visuals that can be shared through social media, and opportunities for citizens to share information and sign up to work with groups in their interest area who are advocating for change.

"We believe we can build more momentum by connecting the "facts" of the case, to real human stories and the emotional connection we all have to the state we love," Austin said. "We are sharing the report and the video in order to help Michigan citizens put pressure on our leaders and legislators to invest in and build up what makes this state special, and go economically."

In addition to the interactive study, we created a [page with several available assets](#) to use to tell and share this story. On our media page, you'll find an embed code to place the video on a website site, various social assets including suggested tweets and shareable images optimized for Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, and contact information for interviewees from the study. We'll also provide support in accessing, placing and sharing the study out. [Follow this link to access the media page.](#) For assistance in navigating our digital assets, email j.austin@PrimaCivitas.org.

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For more information go to www.themichigandream.org or visit the Michigan Economic Center at www.MiEconomicCenter.org.

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About Prima Civitas

Prima Civitas exists to serve all residents of Michigan in creating a new, prosperous, and sustainable economic future for our great state. As an economic driver committed to transforming the way we do business, PC is a center for innovation in the 21st century economy that will define Michigan's future. PC is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. www.primacivitas.org.

About the Michigan Economic Center

The Michigan Economic Center is a PC program that works to develop and promote key policies and practices for advancing our economic future and promotes and facilitates the adoption of the policies and practices by Michigan citizens and leaders. www.MiEconomicCenter.org.